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FATHER COUGHLIN AND HUEY LONG

For several months we have been analyzing various phases of the New Deal. So now we analyze the rival programs.

FATHER COUGHLIN

Last November, Father Coughlin organized his National Union for Social Justice. He said that he was setting up a national lobby. In its proposed form of organization by local units, congressional districts, state conventions and a national convention, it is however a potential political party. But he pledges himself never to seek or accept a public office.

The Program

Glittering Generalities. Several of the sixteen planks are very vague. For instance: a general principle expressing belief in liberty of conscience and education; a plank calling for the cost of production plus a fair profit for the farmer (a well-known demand of western farmers); a labor plank calling for a just and living annual wage for every citizen willing to work and capable of working—a wage "which will enable him to maintain and educate his family according to the standards of American decency."

Currency and Banking Reform. Two of the planks call for the reform of the currency: One would take from the bankers the right to coin and regulate the value of money and restore this to Congress. The other would "maintain the cost of living on an even keel" and repay dollar debts "with equal value dollars" (also a demand of western farmers).

Property. Two planks deal with property: One asks for the nationalizing of "those public necessities which by their nature are too important to be held in the control of private individuals," i.e., banking, credit and currency, power, light, oil and natural gas "and our god-given natural resources." ("I do not subscribe to the theory that we should nationalize public utilities.") The other expresses belief in "private ownership of all other property." ("Our whole idea is to preserve private ownership. I would like to see private ownership multiplied many times. The trouble is that property and wealth have been concentrated in the hands of a few.")

Fascist Symptoms

Money. Currency reform is one of his hobbies. But this is simply tinkering with the economic problem. Yet it is the traditional American program repeatedly urged by the farm population burdened by debt. It takes account of the debtor resentment. It is inflationary in one way or another. When a worker in his forum asked whether the wage earners would suffer under inflation, he answered, "Inflation is a simple process and the worker will be amply protected. I propose that if the money in circulation is doubled a law be passed at the same time doubling wages."

Nationalizing Banking would only prevent minor grafting; curb somewhat excess profits and concentration of control. Socialization is another matter. But he is not asking for that.

Bankers. Along with the demands of his program for money reform go his public vituperative attacks on bankers, as if they were the cause of all our economic ills. (But on occasion he refers to them as lovely men, victims of the system.) The Union for Social Justice has set itself to "clean out the international bankers." Coughlin summons to a crusade: "Are you willing to follow in this fight? Are you willing to rid America of the

international bankers?" He makes it concrete: "Wall Street believes that money is wealth." "We believe that factories, farms, homes, forests, motor cars, universities, schools, churches . . . constitute the real wealth." He attacks the administration for being wedded to the money changers. This is as old as Theodore Roosevelt's use of the big stick against "invisible government" and Woodrow Wilson's attack on big business which, he said, stood at the elbow of government and had the ear of government. And they did it better. They had the facts of their own experience which they set forth in books and speeches.

Another comparison: Coughlin says, "Usury must be abandoned," "Human rights must be preferred to financial rights." cf. Nazi Article of Faith, "Offenders against the interests of the community, usurers, profiteers, etc., should be punished." Coughlin says, "I hope that you share my confidence in the overthrow of the power of international bankers." cf. Nazi Article of Faith, "The struggle against international finance . . . has become the most important incident in the war for freedom and independence."

Labor Program. Coughlin's social justice program calls for the right of the laboring man to organize in unions and the duty of government "to facilitate and protect these organizations against the vested interests of wealth and of intellect." In answer to a forum question he said that the Union for Social Justice is in favor of unions, "though not the kind that we have now," but rather one union for all the automobile workers in the state, one for the bakers, etc. Someone asked him whom he would suggest for auto workers' leaders. He finally named a priest, a Methodist preacher (Merton S. Rice) and a rabbi. During the automobile strike last spring he spoke sympathetically of company unions. Recently he has said, "Strikes and lockouts are absolutely unnecessary." He advocates, "giving real power to the Department of Labor, letting it take over the functions of collective bargaining," thus supplanting the A. F. of L.—"the service of the Federation should be a government service paid for by taxation . . ." The sort of unions he has in mind are shop committees or councils—but controlled and regulated by the state.

This practice in Italy and Germany has delivered labor bound and gagged into the hands of the employer.

The Nazi labor administrator says, "Our corporate organization will as its first work restore absolute leadership to the natural leader of a factory, that is, the employer, and will at the same time place full responsibility on him. Only the employer can decide."

The Italian law prescribes heavy fines for employees who "in groups of three or more cease work by agreement" or otherwise seek "to compel the employers to change the existing contracts"; and imprisonment plus the fine for leaders.

Labor Practice. Coughlin's office workers get less than a living wage. He put up his church buildings with non-union labor which he paid at a rate 40% below the union scale. He has his printing done in a non-union shop. The International Typographical Union and the Cleveland F. of L. have openly denounced him for his non-union policy. And the A. F. of L. once appointed a committee to interview him on this matter. But he would not see the committee.

Concerning War. He won his big radio audience to begin with by attacking war. But the only plank in his platform dealing with this is the one calling for the conscription of wealth in war time. This means everything and nothing. In an interview he refused to give his attitude on military training in the colleges. Congratulating his radio audience on its successful protest to Congress against the United States entrance into the World Court he said, "Now that as a nation we have notified the world of our determination to remain aloof from foreign entanglements, the question of preparedness arises more acutely than ever . . . let us build ten thousand airplanes to guard our coasts . . . to keep America safe for Americans . . ."

The Economic Order. Sometimes he glimpses the relationship between the decline of democracy and the decadence of capitalism. He says that capitalism can't solve the problem of distribution "because its nature has become identified with its abuses." "Their removal means the burial of capitalism." But his program does not disturb class lines. He denounces un-Christian American capitalism because it runs its production exclusively for profit. Just as bitterly he denounces communism (which produces for use). His Christian capitalism is "production for use at a profit." His system requires the adoption of "the principle of stewardship of the majority"; that is, ownership derived from God and directed by the church into channels of justice and philanthropy. It is a reformed and regulated capitalism.

Its Origin

Catholic Teachings. This is the Roman Catholic social philosophy and program. It is found in the encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI and in all liberal authorities. It is expressed this way in the famous Bishop's Program: "The capitalist needs to learn the long-forgotten truth that wealth is stewardship, that profit making is not the basic justification of business enterprise, and that there are such things as fair profits, fair interest, and fair prices." Coughlin's program, derived from medieval sources, runs true to the

economic pattern of the fascist state. In medieval times the regulation of the economic life was to be provided by the church; today the state is to regulate with the church controlling or assisting in the partnership according to the political development of the country. Here the church cannot exert open control as it is doing for instance in Austria and Spain. But Coughlin's followers can be delivered to others for a consideration. Yet in the background lies the conflict between the totalitarian state and the totalitarian church.

HUEY LONG

A year ago Senator Huey Long organized the National Share-Our-Wealth Society to spread his message of wealth distribution. This, like money reform, is a popular panacea. He describes it in a tempting way. It contains something for everybody. He gives simple directions for organizing local clubs which are now springing up across the country. He says, "Hell, I don't give a damn what folks call it or me—radical, conservative or reactionary. All I'm advocating is right out of the Bible. It comes straight out of the scriptures."

The Program

Dividing Up. Every big fortune would be at once cut down to three or four million dollars by means of a capital levy tax. Each capitalist would fill out a questionnaire telling how much he owned and in what form he wanted the amount he is permitted to keep. The rest would go to the United States treasury. A good part of it would be used to give every family who does not at present have it, $5,000 in the form of a home, radio, automobile, etc.

Education. Next the Government would provide all kinds of new schools for all the youth. Especially universities. "College enrolments would multiply 1000%. We would immediately call in the architects and engineers, the idle professors and scholars of learning. We would send out a hurry call" which would start "a fusillade of employment."

Sustaining the Level. To guarantee that the people stay at the new level, every family would get an income of not less than $2,500 a year in return for labor (presumably of the bread earner of the family). There would be a sliding scale of hours—perhaps thirty hours per week, and a working year of eleven months. Perhaps more, for "production will be gauged to meet the market for consumption." The more machinery is used, "the less toil will be required for all of us to survive in splendor."

Agriculture. Farming would be cared for "in the manner specified in the Bible"—no plowing under of crops, no burning of corn, no slaughtering of cattle." As much as possible would be raised. What could not be used would be put in Federal warehouses. Any year that found these full could be taken off by the farmer who would then be put on useful public work—or allowed to go back to school. (But now Long is talking about holding the commodity until we can get a good price for it.)

The Aged and Veterans. Everybody sixty and over having an income of less than $1,000 or less than $10,000 in property or money would get a pension. This would give them comforts and also take them out of the labor market. Veterans would receive the soldiers' bonus and be otherwise provided for "without stint or unreasonable limit."

How can wealth be shared? By merely dividing up money, goods, land—especially when the same interests are left in control to go on with their grabbing concentration? Real sharing can only be achieved by a new method of production and distribution that will *increase* as well as *differently divide* the national product.

HIS RECORD

Long's program cannot be divorced from his political record in his own state.

Labor Record. He says that he is 100% for labor and that labor is 100% for him. But his legislature has not put through the bills providing for old-age pensions, the minimum wage or unemployment insurance. Nationally he has stood for the Child Labor Amendment and the prevailing wage provision in the work relief bill. But his legislature has not ratified the amendment. And it has not granted the prevailing wage on state relief projects. He says, "The prevailing wage in this state is the lowest wage we can get men to work for." Workers on the Louisiana construction jobs, to which he points with pride, have been paid as low as ten cents an hour. Faced with this, he says, "Whoever turned in the lowest bid got the contract." He says that he "can't get messed up" with the job of strengthening organized labor in his own state. The large Negro element of labor—and other Negroes as well—are to him "niggers." He vigorously denies that his abolition of the $1 poll tax will enfranchise Negroes: "The poll tax don't change the status of a nigger one damn bit!"

"Tax the Rich." Especially he talks about helping the poor by taxing the rich. But while he has shifted taxes, the poor still pay. He has abolished the poll tax, but he has put a tax on tobacco—one cent on five cents worth. Two weeks before the 1933 Legislature met he came out for a 25% income tax on incomes above $50,000. But his Legislature passed a 6% tax bill. In his struggles with the corporations, they finally win. This has

proved true even in the famous Standard Oil case. He could not enforce the "occupational" tax passed when he was Governor. Lately his Legislature put a five cents a gallon tax on gasoline. Then he had some conferences with President Hilton of Louisiana Standard Oil. After that he summoned the Legislature in a special session and rebated four of the five cents.

Who Dictates? He controls his state. The Legislature is subservient to him. He goes back to it from Washington and pushes through the bills he wants (34 bills in 70 minutes), many of them the patronage grabbing sort. The governor is his puppet. He names rubber-stamp commissions; usurps local powers; controls civil service employees. He used the National Guard to win the New Orleans election. His political machine has duplicated the tactics of Tammany Hall and the Republican machine in Chicago—and more. The rich cotton, sugar, oil and fur interests, with their Wall Street connections, allow this dictatorship. Among his big backers are such men as Harvey C. Couch, power and railroad magnate (Hoover RFC appointee) who is tied in, in numerous ways, with the large New York banking interests; and Rudolph Hecht, New Orleans bank president and president of the American Bankers Association.

The Status Quo. Bitter poverty on one hand and concentrated wealth on the other remain in Louisiana. Long said in Congress in 1932, "I have not undertaken to persecute the rich, but, on the contrary, I have sought to favor them." His program prescribes Share-the-Wealth as an alternative to Capitalism on the one hand and Communism on the other. But now he is saying that Roosevelt is the biggest menace to capitalism and that he himself is its mainstay. So he is not for confiscation but only for limiting fortunes to three or four million dollars and "spreading around at the bottom" what he "scrapes off the top." He quotes Pope Pius XI as well as the Bible and the Pilgrim Fathers against wealth concentration.

The Race for Fascist Leadership

The Try-Out. The triangular contest in vituperation on the air between Johnson, Coughlin and Long was the preliminary try-out in the race for the leadership of our developing Fascism. The particular issue was whether Coughlin would continue to support Roosevelt or go to Long. Coughlin has been attacking Roosevelt with increasing bitterness. Johnson says that there is an open alliance between Coughlin and Long. (In February the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* said that Long had met and talked with Coughlin and was understood to have obtained a pledge of non-opposition.) After Johnson's attack Coughlin hastened to reaffirm his slogan, "Roosevelt or Ruin." But he has dropped an anchor to windward by announcing that Long is "an honest-to-God devotee of social justice" and "I shall wait with my tongue in my cheek" to see what Long does if Roosevelt continues "to jump out on his promises."

Budding Dictators. Whoever leads it the American Government must become increasingly dictatorial. In differing ways Coughlin and Roosevelt are proposing the substitution of government control for the independent action of organized labor. Long would do it without talking about it. Repressive laws now being proposed and repressive acts already being used record the necessity of holding down the rising protest against impossibly low wages, farm income and relief. The present administration sanctions repression reluctantly and views brutality against strikers and relief protesters as a regrettable necessity. Long's record indicates that to him such measures come naturally. It reveals a dictator by nature and political training.

When They Look Alike. All three of these contestants for leadership of the unawakened masses are against the program at our masthead. All three are seeking to reform and maintain the system described by our General Conference as "unethical, unchristian and anti-social." We have analyzed in our January bulletin the inability of the administration to fulfil the promises it has made to the people. We have shown that the attempt to prop up our present economy by state aid produces profits and relief lines faster than it does jobs or a rising standard of living. The profit system refuses to permit itself to be regulated as Roosevelt and Coughlin propose. Still less does capitalist decline permit the fulfillment of the fantastic promises of Huey Long. It is increasingly clear that there is no middle ground between accepting the system and abolishing it.

Sources. Speeches of Johnson, Coughlin, Long; programs and other printed matter of N. U. S. J. and the Share-the-Wealth Society; articles and items in *Nation, New Masses, New Republic, Forum, Daily Worker, New York Times.*

Fight the Sedition Bills. Especially HR 4313; HR 5845; HR 5839—three dangerous federal bills. Organize joint mass meetings; launch postcard campaigns; send letters and wires to Congress. Is the Radical Parties Bill up in your state? It is pending in several, has been defeated in some, already enacted in others. Get hearings; send delegations; storm your legislature. Send to American Civil Liberties Union, 31 Union Square, New York City, for details and instructions.

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